

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000052

SIPDIS

REL USA AND MCFI
S FOR JIM JEFFREY AND STEVE BEECROFT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/06/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SHIA ALLIANCE LEADERS BLAME MNF-I AND SUNNIS FOR
CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ZALMAY KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

1. (S/REL) SUMMARY: A Shia Coalition "security committee" told the Ambassador and MNF-I Deputy Commanding General (DCG) that the level of violence in Iraq since the election has prompted community and religious leaders to call for taking measures to defend themselves. The committee members said they may not be able to restrain the street from reacting. Furthermore, post-election statements by the Sunni-Arab Tawafuq bloc threaten violence over the election results, but the security ministries are telling the "security committee" that MNF-I is preventing MOD and MOI forces from carrying out their duties. The Ambassador and the DCG reiterated Coalition commitment to fighting terrorism in Iraq, and Coalition support for building up the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and continuing to transfer security responsibility to them. The Ambassador stressed that he has told Sunni Arabs that they cannot participate simultaneously in the political process and the insurgency without being branded as terrorists. END SUMMARY.

SECURITY SITUATION:
SO BAD WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE STREET

2. (C/REL) The Ambassador and MNF-I DCG Lt Gen Houghton met January 4 with Dr. Hussein Shahrستاني (Deputy Speaker of the TNA), Jawad al-Maliki (leading figure in Dawa and chairman of the Security and Defense Committee), and Hadi al-Amiri (Badr Corps). According to Dr. Shahrستاني, they, along with Dr. Qusay (a Sadrist who was not present), constitute a security committee appointed by the leadership within the Shia Coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA).

3. (S/REL) Dr. Shahrستاني described the security situation as "very serious," with religious and local leaders complaining. He said the situation has deteriorated since December 19 when Tawafuq announced it would resist the election results, with some Tawafuq leaders threatening violence. He claimed that many Shia are saying that if the government cannot protect them, then they will take measures to defend themselves. Shahrستاني added that political and religious leaders have been able to restrain the street previously, but that they may be reaching a point where they do not have enough influence to stop the street.

MOD AND MOI SAY MNF-I HINDERS THEIR OPERATIONS

4. (S/REL) Dr. Shahrستاني told Ambassador Khalilzad and Lt Gen Houghton that this newly formed UIA "security committee" had met January 3 with the Ministers of Defense and Interior, and with UK Ambassador Patey on January 4, regarding the security situation. Dr. Shahrستاني said that MOD Dulime and MOI Jabr had both acknowledged that there are sufficient forces to protect the people; however, they said their work is being hindered by MNF-I, specifically citing a lack of cooperation and of support for targeting insurgents. Dr. Shahrستاني stated that this assertion called into question the Shia Coalition's faith both in democracy and in MNF-I. He said they thought MNF-I was here to help Iraqis build democracy and build the capacity of the ISF in order to allow MNF-I to leave. He said that if this perception is not correct, the Shia Coalition will have to tell its supporters that it cannot continue the political process and that the ISF is being prevented from carrying out its duties.

5. (S/REL) Ambassador Khalilzad thanked Dr. Shahrستاني for his comments and replied that he endorsed the UK Ambassador's proposal for an additional meeting to be held on the security situation. This meeting would include MOD Dulime and MOI Jabr, and would address specific complaints.

6. (S/REL) Ambassador Khalilzad then addressed three points. First, he has been clear with the Sunnis that they can't have one foot in politics and one foot in the insurgency/terror. There is no such thing as legitimate resistance (violence) to a legitimate government. Second, there are issues about areas of responsibility for MOD and MOI forces, particularly

in Baghdad. It may be necessary to reduce some MOD areas of responsibility to prevent forces from being spread too thin, and this is a topic for further discussion between MOI and MOD. He underlined the U.S. and Coalition commitment to fighting terrorism and establishing security throughout Iraq, and he also reiterated that the Coalition wants the ISF to carry out its responsibilities so that MNF-I can reduce its footprint. Last, the Ambassador noted that there are certain standards that need to be held to in a democracy, and that ISF and MNF-I may differ on tactics and techniques. He stated that the Coalition wants all people who are in custody to be treated according to the law.

16. (S/REL) Lt Gen Houghton then stated that the overall status of transfer of security responsibility to the Iraqi government is good. He said there is a concern that the nature of the security situation in places like Diyala and Baghdad is shifting to inter-sectarian conflict. It is important, he added, not to respond in a sectarian fashion to sectarian tensions; security issues need to be resolved in an even-handed manner. Lt Gen Houghton noted that MNF-I counsels against the Iraqi Police conducting large-scale detention raids in Sunni communities because these actions that would likely exacerbate the security situation. More carefully targeted operations would be better, he cautioned. Lt Gen Houghton said the Baghdad security plan is being reviewed and will be presented shortly to the Minister's Committee for National Security, in an effort to balance security and sectarian concerns without making the security situation worse.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS ARE PARALYZING THE MOI

17. (S/REL) Hadi al-Amiri agreed that the number of ISF are growing, which is good, but so are the car bombings and kidnappings, which is not. He pointed out that the kidnapping of MOI Jabr's sister the day before (on January 3) "tells everyone that they are vulnerable." He acknowledged that large-scale operations and mass arrests are not good, but the security situation will deteriorate if the security ministries do nothing. Al-Amiri acknowledged that there are human rights abuses in MOI, but pointed out that the abuses are committed by people who were themselves abused by the Sunnis under Saddam Hussein (and therefore understandable). He reiterated that MOI should not be held back by human rights concerns; it needs to act. The Ambassador said MOI should not be frozen into inaction, but still needs to adhere to certain standards. Lt Gen Houghton added that MOI must try to improve its intelligence operations.

18. (S/REL) Jawad al-Maliki said the GOI is trying to control the street, but terrorists are provoking people. He said there are rumors that the U.S. Embassy had agreed with Tawafuq to stop all raids, adding that all gains will be lost if groups can pull out the violence card. He also alleged that while the MOI and MOD are paralyzed, killers are being released because of the Embassy. Al-Maliki said that people need to be interrogated, accusing the Ministry of Human Rights of acting as if only criminals have rights. He then stated his concern that a unity government will be set up in a manner that hampers those who received the most votes in the election.

19. (C/REL) The Ambassador stated that there is no agreement with Tawafuq or anyone else, adding that the Coalition has been pushing Tawafuq to disavow violence. He said the Coalition has told Sunni leaders that the Coalition does not prefer big raids, but instead supports intelligence-driven, focused operations. As for politics, the Ambassador acknowledged that the Coalition favors a national unity government and that Sunni integration is good. The Ambassador said the USG has never called for a ministry distribution formula outside of the elections. He cautioned al-Maliki not to believe stories that the U.S. supports a particular shape or weight for the GOI.

TAWAFUQ STATEMENTS:
MAKING US RECONSIDER NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

10. (S/REL) Dr. Shahrastani noted that the Shia Coalition leadership meets daily and that they have been committed to the idea of a national unity government with Tawafuq. The Shia Coalition is under great pressure to reconsider this position, Shahrastani said, because Tawafuq is perceived not to be a serious partner. He said Tawafuq made strategic mistakes by calling for violence and that it should retract those statements. He said the Shia Coalition will continue to engage Sunni Arab leaders, urging them to use their influence to reduce violence. The Ambassador pointed to the shock felt by Sunni Arabs from the election results, especially in cities like Baghdad. He mentioned that the IMIE observers will act as a face-saving mechanism, and he

urged the Shia Coalition to talk seriously and realistically with them. Lt Gen Houghton then offered to brief Dr. Shahrستاني on the security situation and the transfer of security responsibility on a regular basis, to which Dr. Shahrستاني agreed.

KHALILZAD